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The Montgomery

VOLUME C1—NO. 79

Full Day and Night Service,
of The Associated Press.

MONTGOMERY, ALA.

Governor Calls Conference To Ask Flood Aid

Congressmen, Senators
To Confer With Graves
At Noon Today

To Present Plan To Congress For Relief For Flood Sufferers

Governor Bibb Graves has summoned Alabama congressmen and senators to confer with him in his office at the capitol today at noon, in the presentation to the Congress of the United States, of a call for appropriations for the relief and rehabilitation of the thousands in South Alabama who have been left destitute by the floods that have swept that section.

The nucleus of the plan for relief through Federal legislation, is the provision of an appropriation to meet immediate needs and an appropriation for rehabilitation, the latter to be made available in the form of loans for long periods, at a nominal rate of interest, so that farmers, merchants and others who have lost all their possessions, can make a new beginning and again become self-sustaining.

Governor Graves announced the calling of the conference to convene here today, when he was asked yesterday regarding recommendations made that he call an extra session of the Legislature to provide money for flood relief and the reclamation of the devastated towns and rural districts. In stating the purpose of the conference, namely, the calling for Federal appropriations, the governor stated: "It is the quickest way."

He added that if the Legislature were to meet to submit the proposal of the issuance of bonds in order to raise needed money, the Constitutional amendment that would be necessary to do this could not, under the laws of the state, be voted on until three months after the Legislature adjourned. "Help is needed now," he emphasized.

Congress will be in session again in about three weeks, the chief executive pointed out—and in the meantime, the state and the Red Cross can continue to take care of the flood sufferers until the period of stress is passed.

There is sufficient time...

Elba 'Hello Girls' Saved By Rope After Boat Capsized In Torrent

Like often-told stories of heroic radio operators, sitting at their posts on doomed liners to the moment when they slipped below the surface of the sea, came a story yesterday from Miss Vivian Harper, telephone operator in the little town of Elba, which was almost wiped from the map by the devastating floods.

Miss Harper arrived in Montgomery yesterday and is at the home of her cousin, Mrs. J. P. Blue, 204 Florida Avenue.

Not unlike the radio operators, Miss Harper remained until only a short time before her post was swamped in a raging torrent, transmitting messages for her stricken townspeople, giving what information she could and sending calls for aid to the last.

Miss Harper narrowly escaped drowning. When she, with her brave coworker, Mrs. Mineola Liebert, finally listened to pleas of abandoning the frail two-story telephone building, swiftly-flowing water was passing within a few inches of their feet on the top floor.

Boat Tossed Wildly.

The boat into which they were taken by Arthur Owens, contractor and a Mr. Prescott, tossed wildly. Again and again the men strained every muscle to pull the craft to a two-story house not far away. Despairing, the rescuers turned the prow in the direction of another home in the distance, but in line with the violent current.

The objective, the home of Mrs. Anne Water, was nearly reached when the boat became entangled in wiring. Frantically the little party worked, doing all that was possible to keep the craft from overturning.

"Can you swim?" cried one of the men.

"Yes!" answered Mrs. Liebert.

"No!" replied Miss Harper.

Suddenly the water swirled furiously. The boat, released from the entanglements, was dashed into a tree and splintered. Its occupants disappeared in the muddy water.

The men were the first to reappear, followed by Miss Harper, who grabbed a twig.

"Mrs. Liebert! Mrs. Liebert!" She did not answer. She was not in sight.

Tension Relieved.

The tension was relieved a moment later when she swam from under a part of the capsized boat which had trapped her.

Then the twig to which Miss Harper was holding snapped. She again went

below the water and but for the quick action of Mr. Prescott would have undoubtedly drowned.

Only by almost superhuman strength he held her—one hand grasping her, the other dug into a notch of a tree. He could only keep her that way a few moments.

Several men in Mrs. Water's home



MISS VIVIAN HARPER

threw ropes to the struggling party. Minutes, that seemed like years, were required before one was grasped. Mrs. Liebert was pulled to safety. Then the others.

Thirty Persons In House.

Inside the house fully 30 persons had taken refuge. Luckily there was sufficient water and food. Across the street were other people, including several relatives of Miss Harper and two tiny babies. They

(Continued on Page 2, Column 1)

Flood Waters Hit Florida Fliers Rescued From Conecuh

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Montgomery had to the flood suffer when the comm had been made as merce Tamm's does not represent tions that were m to that hour, as not reported.

At 3 o'clock To mittees reported. Commerce that ear raised \$4,584.45. headquarters at the day of \$4,259.48 day with addition containing checks compiled. Active somery commitments day.

The state fund for the relief of Alabama, last high of \$31,615.76.

This money will by Charles A. Mott State Board of Ad treasurer of the Red Cross, for expi lief work by that

A telegram was day that the Am donated \$35,000 for Alabama, Western Mississippi and No donation was made tional headquarters. Henry M. Baker.

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March 19.—(P)
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Elba 'Hello Girls' Saved By Rope After Capsized In Torrent

(Continued from Page One)

had no food. None could be taken them
on account of the mercurial current.

Six bungalows, piled against a thicket
of trees near the Water home by the
flood, prevented that house from being
swept away.

During the night terrifying cries came
from houses nearby. Children and wo-
men screamed. Men shouted. Houses
creaked. Some were washed away.

The following day the water began to
recede. Rescue parties came from Opp,
Troy and other places. National Guards-
men arrived and airplanes, angels of
mercy, dropped food, clothing and medi-
cine.

Miss Harper was taken from the house
in a boat. She passed the telephone ex-
change. The lower floor had been washed
away. The upper floor was in its place.
As she passed the exchange the cries of
distressed people again came to her—
"Send us help!"—"send us boats for God's
sake."

"It was all like a terrible nightmare,"
she said. "I will never cease hearing
those pitiful cries that came over the
wires before I had to go."

OPP, ALA., March 19.—(Special).—
Refusal to abandon her post of duty al-
most cost Miss Vivian Harper her life
when the flood waters began to climb
to the second story of the building
which houses the telephone exchange at
Elba last Thursday. Miss Harper went
to work about 7 o'clock that fateful
morning and stuck to her switchboard
until the flood had cut off all com-
munication with the outside world.

After working with feverish haste
throughout the entire day Miss Harper
and her brave co-worker, Mrs. P. M.
Liebert, another operator were forced to
leave the building about 5 o'clock in the
afternoon, when Arthur Owens and a
Mr. Prescott came in a motor boat to
the door of the second story to rescue
two ladies and as they entered the
boat the current was so great the boat
burst into pieces. Mrs. Annie Waters,
living nearby saw this and screamed for
help, when a rope was thrown to them
and they were pulled into the two-story
home of Mrs. Waters. All this happened
Thursday.

Experiences here were terrible, they
prepared to climb to the loft in the
event the water forced them there.
There were 30 to 35 people in this one
home and behind they could see seven
bungalows topple over and wash away.
Every minute they thought these heavy
bungalows would wash against their
house and topple it. It was not until
3 or 3 o'clock Saturday evening that
these people were rescued from this house
by government men.

Miss Harper was brought to the Opp
side and taken directly to the home
of Mrs. Earnest King, where she was
given warm dry clothes, nourishing food
and put to bed. Perhaps Miss Harper's
was the most dangerous experience of
any there.

Opp citizens received a call from Elba
about noon Thursday, stating the danger
they were in there. At once Opp re-
sponded to this call and were first to
reach the scene of desolation.

those who took part in this rescue work:
J. E. King, Tommie Champion, George
Armistead, Grady Childre, Henry Stew-
art, Labon Childre, Kay Stephenson
and Maca Hem.

The first truck load of food and cloth-
ing to reach Elba was from Opp, hun-
dreds of refugees are being taken care
of in this place. All private homes and
hotels being thrown open to them. The
national guard, airplanes and rescue
workers from all nearby towns have done
much toward helping these people.

Although Opp was the first to reach
the scene and rescue work was done by
her at least 15 to 20 hours earlier than
by any others. Opp sends out a plea
for help for these Elba people, for this
is indeed a most tragic situation that
the inhabitants of Elba are facing. They
are without food, clothing and their
homes are completely wrecked, if not
washed away.

"No cause in history is greater than
the cause which you are now being given
an opportunity to contribute to.
Words are inadequate to express the des-
olate looks of Elba and the experiences
the refugees have gone through," is the
plea that Opp sends out for these strick-
en people.

FLIERS RESCUED FROM CONE CUH

(Continued from Page One)

Then Lieut. Agee dropped a message
to persons nearby, telling them to take
boats to bring the two men in. Lieut.
Agee then proceeded to Maxwell Field
and made a report of the incident.

Lieut. Meadows and a mechanic of
the National Guard, were sent to Brew-
ton from Maxwell Field upon receipt of
Lieut. Agee's report. Their plane sus-
tained a bent propeller in a forced land-
ing near Brewton but both aviators were
uninjured.

Capt. Muse said last night that the
four aviators would be picked up by re-
lief planes today from Maxwell Field
and from Pensacola.

Flights From Maxwell Field To Be Limited To Emergency Cases

Beginning today flights from
Maxwell Field to the flood area
in South Alabama will be limited to
responses to requests for relief trans-
mitted to the War Department
where it is needed. Flights will
continue to operate, however, to
the flood waters of the Alabama
River south and west of Selma,
where supplies will be dropped to
marooned groups of people wher-
ever they are found. Planes will
also direct by signals, boats taking
people to places of safety.

Limitation of flights to this serv-
ice was ordered yesterday afternoon
by Maj. W. R. Weaver, command-
ing officer at the field, on recom-
mendation of Capt. Donald P. Muse,
operations officer. It was announced
last night. The recommendation of
Capt. Muse was contained in a re-
port made by him immediately fol-
lowing his return during the fore-
noon, from a trip by plane over the
entire flood area during which, he
stated, he found everything in good
shape in the southern section and
the emergency over. He frequently
saw isolated houses in the flood area,
he said, but there was no sign of
life at many of them, and at oth-
ers, people were walking around and
apparently getting along all right.

Capt. Muse made it clear, how-
ever, that the aviators are ready to
meet and cope with any emergency
that may arise which will require
their services.

To make the steak tender, a wringer
with special rolls has been introduced as
a substitute for the usual hammers and
choppers.

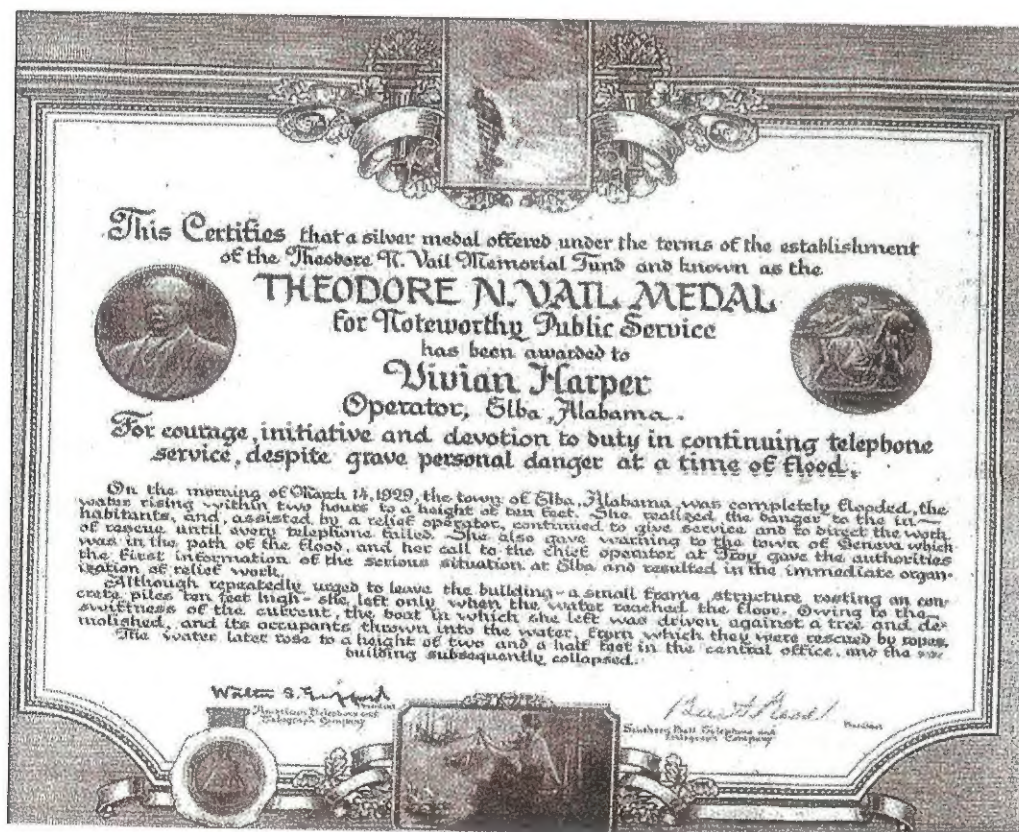
Insurance Beneficiaries

They receive many investment
offers, some highly speculative.
They lose much through inex-
perience. The best way to pro-
tect beneficiaries is through a
Life Insurance Trust. Ask our
Trust Officer to explain.

The
First National Bank

Vivian Harper -

The heroic efforts of Miss Vivian Harper were very significant during the tragic 1929 flood. As flood waters continued to rise, Miss Harper and her relief operator, Mrs. Mineola Liebert, were on duty and stayed in touch with local residents until every telephone had failed. Miss Harper warned the citizens of Geneva about the flood and enabled them to be better prepared for the coming flood. She also contacted telephone operators in neighboring towns and relief came much sooner because of her efforts and dedication to the people of Elba. As the water came into the building the two operators escaped into a waiting boat. Miss Harper received the Theodore N. Vail Silver Medal for her heroism.



Hello Girls was the colloquial name for American female switchboard operators in World War I.

They were formally known as the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit. During World War I, these switchboard operators were sworn into the U.S. Army Signal Corps.

jamlong@elbaal.gov

From: Nell Gilmer <nellgilmer@troycable.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 4:27 PM
To: Hawkins Jacque
Cc: Jennifer Amlong
Subject: March program at Elba Library about Women's History
Attachments: Vivian Harper.docx

I am attaching info about a hero in Elba - our own Hello Girl! Altho it was in 1929, it's a good example of someone using the telephone to save lives - and it was a female operator.

Miss Vivian's nephew John Harper has the certificate hanging in his home. He doesn't know what happened to the medal or the plaque that used to hang in the telephone exchange office which was flooded in 1990. I'm going to contact the GTE office in Raleigh and see if they have any idea. I don't know who the telephone people are that use that building in Elba - but I will find out. I love being detective.

I still have some of my hello girls but I took the tri-fold poster apart because I didn't know I would ever use it again. The library has the book "Hello Girls" and we could show a trailer of the movie and recommend people watch it later. I think it is a long movie. Let me know what I need to put together and who will be attending, etc. What is the date? Mr. Al Gilmore, Elba history teacher, might promote it to his seniors for extra credit.

Nell

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This email has been checked for viruses by Avast antivirus software.
<https://www.avast.com/antivirus>

